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# Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Communications Radio-TV Division Washington, DC 20250-1340 (202)720-4330

Letter No. 2626

September 3, 1993

**TALKING NAFTA** -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy met with officials in Mexico City, August 28-31, to discuss progress toward the North American Free Trade Agreement. The United States is Mexico's largest supplier of agricultural products while Mexico is the fourth largest market for United States agricultural exports, totaling \$3.8 billion in 1992. While in Mexico City, Espy opened the U.S. food exhibition -- the largest ever presented outside its borders -- at an international food exposition. **Contact: Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623.**

**ALFALFA HOTLINE** -- USDA has established an alfalfa hotline for buyers hit by flood or drought who are seeking forage. In Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Illinois, call 1-800-279-6319. In other States call 1-316-225-1158. **Contact: Sara Short (202) 219-0769.**

**FAST FOOD INVASION** -- U.S. fast food chains are expected to generate rapid expansion overseas, particularly in Europe. The major fast food outlets have experienced their greatest sales growth in international markets, and are forecast to have a 20 percent market share of Europe's food service establishments by 1995. Meanwhile in the USA, fast food chains will be using additional methods of distribution. Several firms plan to use kiosks or carts, especially at colleges and universities. By the end of this year 200 schools will have the additional outlets. The number of kiosks and carts on campuses is expected to grow 20-30 percent a year as operators try to win and retain customers. **Contact: Charlene Price (202) 219-0868.**

**DAIRY PRICES** -- Retail dairy prices are expected to be flat during the remainder of this year. Farm milk prices are expected to stay lower during 1993 due to continued increases in milk production. Milk cow numbers are falling, but milk per cow has increased to a total output that is one percent above a year ago. Manufacturing milk values will probably be heavily dependent on the cheese market. **Contact: (202) 219-0767.**

**COTTON PRODUCTION** -- Despite a projected increase in cotton use, U.S. cotton production of 18.5 million bales will push stocks to the highest levels in five years, 6.6 million bales. Planted area increased 3 percent this season to 13.7 million acres. Producers expect to harvest 13.3 million acres, up 20 percent from 1992. The national average cotton yield is expected to be 668 pounds per harvested acre, down 31 pounds from last year, but the third highest on record. Abundant stocks are forcing prices lower as export competition remains intense. **Contact: Robert Skinner (202) 219-0840.**

**PEER HEADS RDA** -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy has appointed Wilbur Peer as acting administrator of USDA's Rural Development Administration. Peer is a native of Lee County Arkansas, and was serving as RDA special assistant to the administrator. Peer will be responsible for a community development loan and grant program totaling nearly \$2 billion. **Contact: Marlyn Aycok (202) 720-4323.**

**GROCERY FUTURE IS ARRIVING** -- Non-traditional retail outlets have caused traditional grocery stores to appeal to the more price-conscious consumer. In 1980 there were only 8 wholesale clubs in the entire retailing industry. In early 1993 there were 779 with sales of \$34 billion, about 6 percent of all grocery sales, and the expansion is forecast to continue. The specialized outlets have lower operating costs and offer lower prices to consumers. Traditional supermarkets are responding by offering discount and bulk sections, private-label products, longer hours, and promotion of the fact that no membership fees are required. The impact on the traditional supermarket industry is expected to create new marketing strategies. Growth of warehouse clubs will likely occur in small markets, where competition is less. **Contact: Doris Newton (202) 219-0868.**

**VEGETABLE IMPORTS** -- Fresh vegetable imports are larger than year-ago figures. Thus far this fiscal year imports total 1.8 million tons, valued at \$1 billion. A 35 percent boost above last year. Large increases were registered in tomatoes from Mexico, a 94 percent jump from the weather reduced crop of last year. Potato imports from Canada have increased 106 percent, reflecting the competitive change in increased U.S. potato prices. **Contact: Joel Greene (202) 219-0822.**

**HOW'D THEY DO THAT?** -- During the past 40 years plant breeders have succeeded in making Pima cotton more heat tolerant and have increased fiber yields threefold. Until recently they didn't know how the changes came about. Recent studies by scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service show that water transpiration from the plant leaves increased. Just as human perspiration cools the body, evaporation from leaves cools cotton plants. They also found that avoiding heat stress during critical growth stages is the key to high cotton yields. The findings are a big step forward. Now it may be possible to look directly at leaf temperatures and identify genetic lines possessing heat tolerance, improving crops faster. **Contact: Richard Percy (602) 379-4221.**

**MODELING FARM PROGRAMS** -- Among the goals of U.S. farm programs is an attempt to affect the market price by controlling the supply of farm produce. Participation in farm programs is voluntary. A new publication, "A Model of Participation in U.S. Farm Programs," issued by USDA's Economic Research Service, examines the tradeoffs between set-asides, designed to control supplies and increase market prices, and price supports, which encourage farmers to increase supply and depress market prices. The study shows that the tradeoffs between set-asides and price supports depends of the level of farmer participation in the program, and on the level of capital stocks in the farm sector which tends to soften or offset the effects of policy changes. To order a copy dial 1-800-999-6779. The cost is \$9.00 a copy. **Contact: Robbin Shoemaker (202) 219-0404.**

**FOREST STRATEGY** -- The USDA Forest Service is developing a strategy to manage national forests in eastern sections of Oregon and Washington. It is based on a study completed by agency scientists and will focus on restoring the health of forest ecosystems, and harvest dead and dying timber. **Contact: Patty Burel (503) 326-7739.**

**LEAF COLOR HOTLINE** -- This year's wet spring should help provide an outstanding display of fall colors. USDA's Fall Color Hotline began operation September 1 and is updated each Thursday. Callers will hear a taped message suggesting travel routes for good viewing in selected national forests. The toll-free number for fall tree leaf color is: 800-354-4595. **Contact: Judy Kissinger (202) 205-1094.**

## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

**AGRICULTURE USA #1891** -- Low input landscaping saves money and helps the environment too. **Brenda Curtis** reports from Nebraska. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

**CONSUMER TIME #1373** -- The trusty troopers; microbial early warning; insurance needs; combo meals; avocado abundance. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

**AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1883** -- USDA news highlights; disaster aid update; beating the barnyard blues; recycling sludge; ancient sunflower seeds. (Weekly reel of news features.)

**NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1636** -- Disease vs. disease; Corn-based foams help seedlings; new use for newspaper; preserving landfill space; tomato extender. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

**UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** -- Wednesday, September 15, milk production report; Thursday, September 16, tobacco outlook, European outlook; Friday, September 17, cattle on feed, agricultural outlook; Monday, September 20, wheat outlook, U.S. trade update. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

**USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.**  
*Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.*

## FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

**FEATURES** -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on pesticide record keeping. **Lynn Wyvill** reports about research on protecting the exterior of wood.

**ACTUALITIES** -- USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the latest weather and crop conditions; USDA economist **Steve Macdonald** on U.S. agricultural exports; USDA economist **Jim Miller** on the dairy outlook, and USDA economist **Robert Skinner** on cotton and wool.

**UPCOMING FEATURES** -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on letters by Thomas Jefferson found at the National Agricultural Library. **Lynn Wyvill** reports about mulch mats.

**EVERY OTHER WEEK** -- **Agriculture Update** with anchors **Eric Parsons** and **Lori Spiczka**. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

*Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.*



## OFFMIKE

**WE LIKE GETTING OUT OF THE STUDIO...**to do the "Farm Show on the Road," says **Emery Kleven** (KMNS, Sioux City, IA). The crew stops at small town cafes, broadcasts the markets, weather, and interviews local producers. Response has been terrific. What began as a three month experiment is now being booked a year in advance. Emery says cattle and hog producers are doing OK in his area, but grain farmers to the north and east of Sioux City are not optimistic.

**SOYBEANS AND CORN...**are looking great, but producers are worried about frost because the crops got in late last spring, says **Dave Koffee** (WIBC, Indianapolis, IN). The farm community is rallying behind an effort to revamp the state property tax, they want suspension of the method used to assess the tax. Dave says state fair attendance was down 50,000 this year. Two days were rained out.

**WE'RE TOTALLY FOCUSED...**on the state fair, says **Lee Kline** (WHO, Des Moines, IA). Little rain has helped attendance reach a new record, along with the public's desire for a change of pace.

### *Farm Broadcasters Letter*



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**A CONCERT...**by country stars John Conlee and Michelle Wright helped to raise funds for flood victims and to provide relief from the stress of coping, says **David Lee** (KHMO, Hannibal, MO). The station sponsored the event. Dave says the flooded Mississippi River's destruction of thousands of acres of once prime farmland is unbelievable, and will likely take years to restore if the government allows it. The 600 people of Hull, IL, may not be allowed to return and rebuild their flooded homes. Dave says farmers whose land was not flooded have terrific corn and beans, there's just not much of it in his area.

**PRODUCERS...**are chasing the frost date, says **Mike Murphy** (KSUM, Fairmont, MN). Crops are behind on heat units, and will require that the first frost hold off until the third week of October. Mike says some producers have corn that won't make good silage, and is being turned under. Pork producers are doing well. If prices hold they will continue to provide a foundation for the local economy.

**VIC POWELL**  
Chief, Radio & TV Division